



December 30, 2004

Felon admits firearms offense linked to an assault in Woonsocket

Matthew Jones, 30, has pleaded guilty to being a felon in possession of a firearm, admitting that he wielded a handgun when he assaulted a woman in Woonsocket in November 2003. Jones also pleaded guilty to possessing crack cocaine.

United States Attorney Robert W. Corrente announced the guilty plea, which Jones entered on December 27 before U.S. District Court Judge William E. Smith in U.S. District Court, Providence. Jones, whose address is unknown, is detained pending sentencing.

At the plea hearing, Assistant U.S. Attorney Richard W. Rose said that, had the case gone to trial, the government would have proven that, on November 19, 2003, Jones assaulted a Woonsocket woman and wielded a gun during a dispute at her front door. The woman fought back by kicking Jones and then called 911.

A responding officer saw Jones outside the woman's home and ordered him to step away from the door but Jones fled. The officer saw what appeared to be a gun in Jones' hand and then heard the sound of rounds being ejected from a pistol.

After backup officers arrived, they found Jones lying nearby on the ground, his hands locked behind his head. Officers found a .40 caliber pistol, a magazine cartridge, and four rounds of ammunition hidden in various places near Jones. Arresting officers seized 5.6 grams of crack cocaine from one of Jones' pockets.

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The victim told police that Jones had come to her home wanting to buy back a car that he had sold her. She said that, when she refused, he punched her. Then she saw him pull out a gun and she kicked him. He fell, dropping the gun and, when he bent to pick it up, she kicked him again, locked her front door, and dialed 911.

Jones has prior convictions in Massachusetts for rape and, as a felon, is prohibited from possessing firearms. The statutory maximum penalty for being a felon in possession of a firearm is ten years in federal prison and a \$250,000 fine. The statutory maximum penalty for possessing crack cocaine is 20 years in federal prison and a \$1,000,000 fine. Federal sentencing is determined on the basis of guidelines that rely on such factors as the specific nature of the offense and a defendant's criminal background. Sentencing is scheduled for March 18.

Woonsocket Police and the **Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives** (ATF) investigated the case. A joint review of the case by the U.S. Attorney's Office and the Rhode Island Attorney General's Office resulted in the federal charges.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Rose is prosecuting the case as part of **Project Safe Neighborhoods**, a Department of Justice initiative against gun crimes. Under Project Safe Neighborhoods, the U.S. Attorney's Office, working with ATF, the Rhode Island Attorney General's Office, and other agencies, aggressively prosecutes federal firearms offenses in an effort to incarcerate those responsible for gun violence and deter others from committing gun crimes. Since 2001, federal firearms prosecutions in Rhode Island have more than doubled and gun offenders have been sentenced to a total of more than 550 years in federal prison.